

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1 and 3-7, rewrite claims 16 and 20 and add new claim 34, as shown below in the detailed listing of all claims which are, or were, in this application:

Claims 1-15 (canceled).

16. (Currently amended) A method for adjusting a biodegradation rate of a silica fibre spun from a silica sol, wherein the method comprises adjusting the biodegradation rate by controlling the viscosity of the spinning sol wherefrom the fibre is spun, wherein a viscosity of the spinning sol is from about 1 000 to below 100 000 mPas, such that fibres derived from sols having low viscosity during the spinning process degrade more slowly than fibres derived from sols prepared at a higher spinning viscosity.

17. (Canceled).

18. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 16 wherein the viscosity of the spinning sol is from about 1 000 to about 50 000 mPas.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 18 wherein the viscosity of the spinning sol is from about 2 000 to about 15 000 mPas.

20. (Currently amended) A method for adjusting a biodegradation rate of a silica fibre spun from a silica sol, wherein the method comprises adjusting the biodegradation rate by controlling the viscosity of the silica sol wherefrom the fibre is spun at the starting point of the spinning process, such that fibres spun from an early stage of the spinning process degrade more slowly than fibres spun in a later stage.

21. (Original) The method according to claim 20 wherein the viscosity of the silica sol at the starting point of the spinning process is below 100 000 mPas.

22. (Original) The method according to claim 21 wherein the viscosity of the silica sol at the starting point of the spinning process is from about 1 000 to about 50 000 mPas.

23. (Original) The method according to claim 22 wherein the viscosity of the silica sol at the starting point of the spinning process is from about 2 000 to about 15 000 mPas.

24. (Previously presented) A delivery device comprising the controllably biodegradable fibre according to claim 30, wherein the fibre contains a biologically active agent.

25. (Original) The delivery device according to claim 24, wherein said biologically active agent is a medicine, a protein, a hormone, a living or dead cell, a bacteria, a virus or a part thereof.

26. (Original) The delivery device according to claim 25, wherein said biologically active agent is a medicine.

27. (Previously presented) A pharmaceutical preparation comprising a delivery device according to claim 24.

28. (Previously presented) A method for administering a biologically active agent to a human or animal, wherein said method comprises implanting, injecting or mucosally attaching a delivery

device, wherein said delivery device comprises a controllably biodegradable fibre according to claim 30 and wherein the fibre comprises a biologically active agent.

29. (Original) The method according to claim 28, wherein the biologically active agent is administered into a mammal.

30. (Previously presented) A controllably biodegradable silica fibre spun from silica sol, a biodegradation rate of said fibre being adjusted by controlling the starting point of the spinning process by a viscosity of the silica sol wherefrom the fibre is spun, the solubility of the fibre in simulated body fluid being 0.2 to 20 wt-%/h.

31. (Previously presented) A controllably biodegradable silica fibre according to claim 30, the solubility of the fibre in simulated body fluid being 0.2 to 8.5 wt-%/h.

32. (Previously presented) A controllably biodegradable silica fibre spun from a silica sol, a biodegradation rate of the fibre being adjusted by controlling the viscosity of the spinning sol

wherefrom the fibre is spun, the solubility of the fibre in simulated body fluid being 0.2 to 20 wt-%/h.

33. (Previously presented) A controllably biodegradable silica fibre according to claim 32, the solubility of the fibre in simulated body fluid being 0.2 to 8.5 wt-%/h.

34. (New) A method for preparing a biodegradable silica fibre, comprising

correlating a desired biodegradability of a silica fibre with a viscosity of a silica sol,

preparing a silica sol, and

spinning a fibre from said silica sol,

wherein the spinning process is begun when the viscosity of the silica sol reaches a value correlating to said desired biodegradability of the silica fiber.